



National Returning Veterans Conference

The Road Home:

National Conference on Returning Veterans' and Their Families' Behavioral Health

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OBJECTIVES



- Discuss common challenges facing individuals as they come home from combat.
- Discuss options and processes for restoration.
- Discuss opportunities for faith-based restoration support systems.



I love war
and responsibility
and excitement.
Peace is going
to be hell on me.



--George S. Patton



*Odysseus in America:
Combat Stress and the
Trials of Homecoming*
by Jonathan Shay



Unhealed Wounds

Homer's *The Odyssey*



- Strained Relationships with Civilians
- Staying in Combat Mode
- Flight from Pain
- Flight from Boredom



Unhealed Wounds

Homer's *The Odyssey*



- Workplace Combat Mission
- No Safe Place
- Dangerous Women
- Memory and Guilt



Restoration



- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
 - Persistence of valid adaptations to danger into a time of safety afterward.
 - An injury, not a disorder.
 - Physical wound/physical nutrition.
 - Psychological wound/social nutrition.
 - Injuries may disable, but do not have to destroy.



Restoration



- Complex PTSD
 - Injury invades character and capacity for social trust is destroyed.
 - Social Trust: expectation that power will be used in accordance with “what’s right.”
 - When social trust is destroyed, replaced by a perpetual mobilization to fend off attack, humiliation, or exploitation.



Restoration



- Complex PTSD
 - A Veteran with Complex PTSD *does not trust anyone.*
 - Restoration of the capacity for social trust happens only in community.
 - Mental Health professionals are pushed off center stage.



Restoration



- Religious/Spiritual activities have incredible value.
 - Confession/Forgiveness
 - Recognizing a larger/greater meaning and purpose in life
 - Community of faith



Restoration

Stages of Recovery

- 1) Establishment of safety, sobriety, and self-care.
- 2) Developing a personal narrative and grieving.
- 3) Reconnecting with people, communities, ideals, and ambitions.



Restoration

Stage 1 Recovery

Establishment of safety, sobriety, and self-care.

Resources Available Through USMC

- Uniformed Mental Health
 - Navy Psychiatrists/Psychologists
 - Primarily Psychiatric Support
 - Involved with Suicidal Ideation
 - If military member presents self as dealing with PTSD



Restoration

Stage 1 Recovery

Establishment of safety, sobriety, and self-care.

Resources Available Through USMC

- Consolidated Substance Abuse Control Center
 - Intensive Outpatient Care-10 day education/group therapy workshop
 - Inpatient Care-21 to 42 day rehabilitation program
 - Alcoholics Anonymous



Restoration

Stage 2 Recovery

Developing a personal narrative and grieving.

Resources Available Through USMC

- Uniformed Mental Health
- Counseling Services
 - Civilian Contracted Counselors working for DOD
 - Individual Counseling
 - Post Combat Groups



Restoration

Stage 2 Recovery

Developing a personal narrative and grieving.

Post Combat Groups

- Goals:
 - Verbalize an understanding of Combat Stress reactions
 - Develop skills to aid in the management of Combat Stress reactions
 - Appreciate the support of others who have been through similar situations
 - Identify additional resources for services



Restoration

Stage 2 Recovery

Developing a personal narrative and grieving.

Post Combat Groups

- **Actions (10 Week Group):**
 - Telling Your Story
 - Managing Anxiety
 - Managing Anger
 - Managing Guilt and Grief
 - Dreams and Nightmares
 - Positives and Negatives of Combat
 - Happiness, Pleasure, and Humor
 - Prevention Plan
 - Beyond Iraqi Freedom



Restoration

Stage 2 Recovery

Developing a personal narrative and grieving.

Resources Available Through USMC

- Military One Source
 - Community based civilian counselors
 - Military member and dependents can access
 - 6 sessions of counseling free per dependent
 - Individual or Marriage



Restoration

Stage 2 Recovery

Developing a personal narrative and grieving.

Resources Available Through USMC

- Unit Chaplain
 - Telling the story
 - Grief work
 - Developing goals and strategy
- Unit Leaders



Restoration

Stage 3 Recovery

Reconnecting with people, communities,
ideals, and ambitions.

Resources Available Through USMC

- Uniformed Mental Health
- Counseling Services
- Unit Chaplain
- Unit Leaders
- Single Marine Program



Faith-Based Opportunities



Faith-Based Organizations have a unique ability to support:

Stage 2 Recovery

Developing a personal narrative and grieving.

Stage 3 Recovery

Reconnecting with people, communities, ideals, and ambitions.



Faith-Based Opportunities



Best Developed Through:

- Partnerships with recognized support organizations—ASYMCA, Military Outreach Ministries
- Long-term relationships—supporting units before, during, and after deployments



Faith-Based Opportunities



Best Developed Through:

- Supporting families during deployment—spouses, children, parents
- Providing opportunities for one-on-one relationships



Faith-Based Opportunities



Possible Practical Means:

- Assisting with pre-deployment family days, marriage enrichment seminars
- Remain behind support
- Assisting with post-deployment reunion activities
- Providing opportunities for community relations projects



Faith-Based Opportunities



While care packages with candy and toiletries are nice—it's a greater support to know our families are being supported while we are away.



Faith-Based Opportunities



A Word on Guilt and Forgiveness

- Power of Confession
 - Confession of perceived guilt is powerful tool
 - Important to not explain away guilt, but to absolve it
- Communal Rites of Purification
 - Way to provide a sense of a fresh start



Questions/Discussion

